

Celebrating Impact Conference, Keele University, 17th June 2019

Be careful what you wish for!

On the joys and angst of partnership for impact

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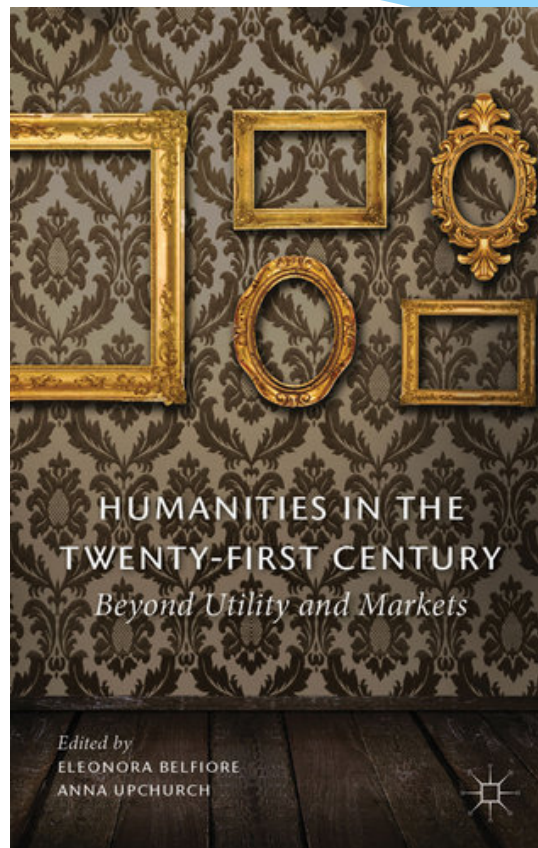
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An introduction...

My experience as a cultural policy researcher



- My work on the central role of the notion of the 'socio-economic impact' of the arts in policy rhetoric and the problem of 'value'
- The rise of the impact agenda in HE
- My very personal 'impact moral dilemma'

Academic anxieties...

The hired hand vs. the purist academic dilemma

“... what the cultural sector really wants from research is the killer evidence that will release dizzying amounts of money into the sector. Its expectations of research can be unrealistic” (Scullion and Garcia 2005).

Why engage if you're useless?

James Dyson on the Times (2012):

Britons “don’t choose the difficult, hard work, of science and technology and engineering...

... we should push engineering and more technology so that “little Angelina wanting to go off to study French lesbian poetry will suddenly realise that things like keeping an aircraft industry, developing nuclear energy, high-speed trains, all these things are important”.

If you can't beat them, JOIN THEM! (or simply speak like them...)

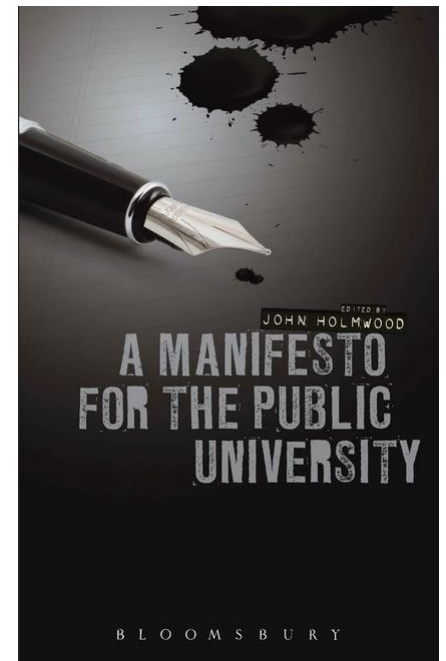
*From AHRC's **Leading the World: The economic impact of UK arts and humanities research** (2009):*

... for every **£1** spent on research by the AHRC, the nation may derive as much as **£10** of immediate benefit and another **£15-£20** of long-term benefit. Thus in 2006-7, the AHRC invested **£60.3 million** in new research, which implies immediate returns of over **£616.9 million** and a possible additional return over 25 years of around **£1 billion**.

Value of research = Economic value/impact?

Prof Sir Steven Smith, President of UUK (2011):

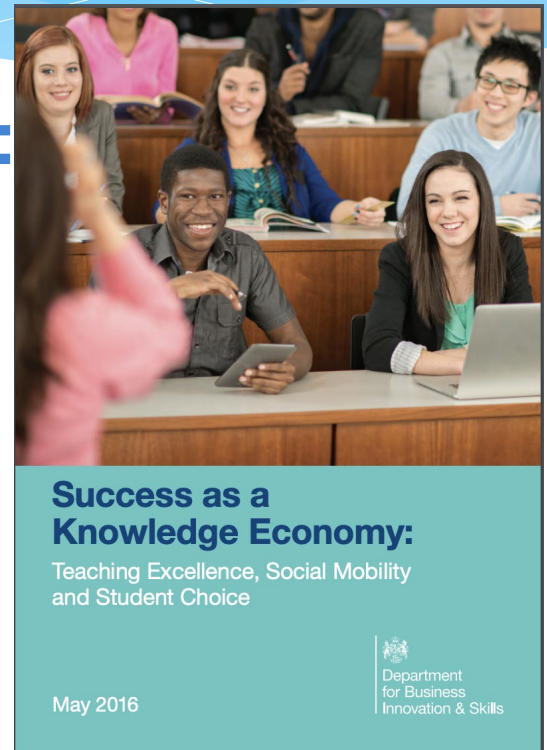
“This decision to minimize the reductions in funding to universities meant that we based our case on the economic role of universities. We faced such a strong call for significant reductions in direct public funding to universities that *we felt the language of economics was the only language that would secure the future prosperity of our universities* and higher education institutions [...]”.



Delivering economic impact *in perpetuity...*

From the HE White Paper, March 2016:

“For every **£1** spent by government on research and development, private sector productivity raises by **20p** annually, in perpetuity” (p. 17)



The economic impact of research – a question of (blind) faith?

41. Scientific and technological advancements have revolutionised the way we lead our lives and driven prosperity and well-being. The UK's research sector justifiably enjoys a world-leading reputation. Our share of highly cited articles is second only to the US, and the UK has overtaken the US to rank first by field-weighted citation impact - an index that controls for the tendency of certain subject areas or forms of publication to be more likely to attract citations than others. For every £1 spent by the Government on research and development, private sector productivity rises by 20p annually, in perpetuity.



The science budget [Contents](#)

3 A roadmap for research and development

23. Even though “on many measures [the UK Science base] is the most efficient in the world”,¹² producing excellent research in a highly competitive system, witnesses expressed near unanimous concern that at least since 2004 the UK’s level of public and private R&D investment has been internationally low and falling. Imperial College London were clear that this would have consequences:

Professor Brian Cox was just as alarmed:

If there is another flat cash settlement, realistically it is dire. That is not my opinion; it seems to be the unanimous opinion of the research councils. Certainly in my area, for the STFC, it is an absolute disaster. I would be extremely pessimistic if that happened.²²

29. The Royal Society of Chemistry believed that even a real-terms freeze on science spending would leave the UK in danger of falling behind our competitors, many of whom are continuing to invest heavily in research and development. They wanted resource funding to be ring-fenced and protected against inflation, but also for the Government to “commit to a long-term ambition to increase science spending as economic growth returns”.²³ Similarly, the Royal Society of Edinburgh wanted “to see the Government commit to at least a trajectory for the resource budget to be rising over the term of this Parliament and starting to close the investment gap with some of our key competitors”.²⁴

The productivity case for R&D investment

30. In 2002, when the European Council adopted a target of spending 3% of GDP on public and private sector R&D, its economic analysis showed that the policy would “have a significant impact on long-term economic growth and employment in Europe, to the order of 0.5% of supplementary output and 400,000 jobs per year after 2010”.²⁵

31. The Government’s own research shows that 51% of productivity growth between 2000 and 2008 was due to innovation²⁶ and that firms that consistently invest in R&D were 13% more productive than those that do not.²⁷ The knowledge economy already accounts for one third of all jobs, with STEM jobs commanding salaries 20% above the average.

32. There is also clear evidence that publicly funded R&D creates a strong ‘multiplier effect’ and ‘crowds-in’ private sector, charitable and inward investment, stimulating around 30% more self investment from industry.²⁸ For every £1 spent by the Government on R&D, private sector R&D productivity rises by 20p per year in perpetuity.²⁹ As Universities UK told us: “this would imply ... a total discounted value (at a 5% discount rate) of a 300% return on the initial investment. If the higher bound of the estimate is used, a discounted value of a 900% return on investment would be expected.”³⁰

of the Higgs

on a knife-edge:
cle physics,
activities leading
astrial

‘Impact’ is about BIG questions:

- Impact asks what is the demonstrable value of research but also what is the role of universities in society?
- What do university contribute to civic society?
- Who and what is research for? (and who decides?)
- What comes after critique?
- For cultural policy studies in particular: what is the ideal relationship between scholarly work and the policy sphere?

A more personal take:

The public engagement and impact agenda has forced me to ask key questions:

- What kind of academic am I?
- What kind of academic should I be?
- How would I articulate the broader value of what I do?
- Making sense of the seeming paradox of an ‘impact champion’ whose scholarly reputation is based on years of critiquing and debunking the rhetoric of impact

On the naivety of the 'speaking truth to power' idea:

- There is no single truth to be spoken...
- Academics don't and can't sit outside of power relations looking in...
- The complication of the impact agenda (which reinforces the idea of an *external force impacting* on something)

Cultural Intelligence : a way forward?

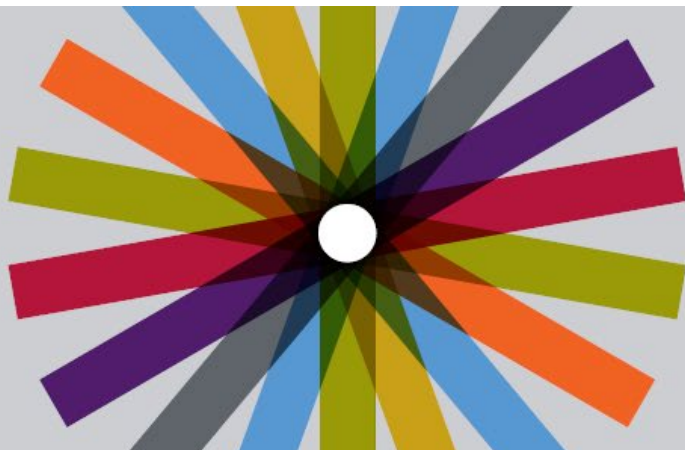
“I propose to conceptualize cultural intelligence as an orientation to knowledge and understanding which goes beyond cultural critique through **a practical engagement with complexity** [...]

[C]ultural intelligence involves the recognition that navigating complexity can never be a question of definitive or one size-size-fits-all ‘solutions’; a complex problem can only be addressed partially, through an ongoing and painstaking negotiation with its multiple aspects, the different ways in which it is perceived, and the divergent interests and perspectives involved”.

Is a solution getting our academic
hands ‘dirty’?

The Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value

“The aim of the Commissions is to make thought provoking contributions to the debate thereby assisting policymakers to find solutions to sometimes seemingly intractable problems”.



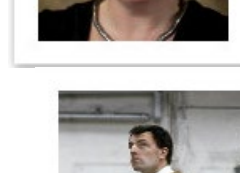
Enriching Britain:
Culture, Creativity and Growth

The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission
on the Future of Cultural Value

Why cultural value?

- * The theme of cultural value and the question of its articulation and measurement key to cultural policy in the past 25 years
- * Austerity, funding cuts and the need to 'make the case' for the value of arts & culture
- * Overlaps between arts and creative industries and other areas of policy of growing prominence (e.g. tourism, education and skills, soft power, strategies for growth, etc.)
- * A strong area of expertise within Warwick (CCPS, Sociology, Theatre Studies, Film & TV, Law, WBS, etc.)

Commissioners



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK
THE WARWICK COMMISSION



Tackling the cultural value challenge collaboratively:

- Challenging the myth of the neutrality of policy and the linear research-policy nexus it presupposes
- Pushing the debate beyond the obsession with funding (simile of the ecosystem)
- Feeding critical perspectives into policy debates + asking the awkward questions
- Bringing a diverse range of expertise together as a way to develop fresh thinking
- **This can only ever be a collaborative effort!**

The goals

- Shifting the public debate on the value of the arts and culture beyond advocacy – longer term aim
- Pushing the debate beyond the policy silos and turning into a genuinely public conversation
- Getting critique out there in the real world to do its job!
- Consolidating the impact of the ‘Warwick approach’ to developing cultural policy thinking
- Developing/Strengthening partnerships and collaborations of strategic value (to both Warwick and the cultural and creative sector)

What has been achieved?

The Warwick Commission:

- Bringing unequal access to cultural participation and cultural work to the top of the arts policy agenda
- Reinforcing the crucial connection between arts policy and education policy: the central importance of cultural education for all
- Getting 'the great and the good' to acknowledge issues of unequal access, lack of diversity and representativeness across the sector
- Informing the pre-general election debate around arts, education and creative industries policy
- Pledges from parties (and even cross-party consensus!)

On navigating a middle ground between ‘public value’ and ‘impact’

- ‘Relevance’ a more helpful notion than ‘usefulness’
- Respecting professional expertise and creative practice as legitimate sources of insight and knowledge, alongside scholarly expertise
- Collaboration and partnership as a model of interaction conducive to better work:
 - Working WITH the sector, rather than ON or FOR the sector
- The ultimate goal: a new “culture of knowledge-based practice”

It's hard work but it's worth it...

- Belief in the public value of research
- Critique is only the first step in the research process
- Facilitating the collaborative post-critique moment is an essential aspect of being a researcher
- Whilst some aspects of the impact agenda are questionable, the aspiration that research should make a real change in the world is not
- Requirement: mastering the art of '**acceptable compromise**' (and learning to live with it)



Thank you!